

HEALTH INSURANCE.

In response to public interest in health insurance the Massachusetts Legislature has created a commission to study social insurance with special reference to sickness. The state department of health and the bureau of statistics are directed to co-operate with the commission of nine members which will prepare a report and recommend the form of legislation to be introduced in January, 1917. California has a similar state commission already at work on this problem which is attracting wide attention since the introduction this year of bills for health insurance in Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey. Proponents of this legislation believe it will bring about a movement for "health first" comparable to the safety first campaign which followed workmen's compensation for accidents.

DOCTOR GEORGE L. PAINTER.

After the JOURNAL was entirely made up, came the inexpressibly sad news of the sudden and violent death of Doctor George L. Painter of San Francisco, a more extended notice of whose life and death will appear in a subsequent issue of the JOURNAL.

DOCTOR CORNELIUS VAN ZWALENBURG.

In May, just as he was about to leave Riverside for San Francisco to attend a meeting of the Council of the State Medical Society, Doctor Van Zwalenburg tripped, fell down stairs and suffered a fracture of the neck of the femur. He naturally has been confined to the hospital since that date, but the last reports were to the effect that he was doing very nicely and would soon be around.

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ORIGINAL ARTICLES**THE PASSING OF THE BONE PLATE.**

By P. S. CAMPICHE, M. D., M. R. C. S., (Eng.),
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In a previous paper I have emphatically protested against wholesale and indiscriminate operations in so many cases of fracture that would do much better if left alone, and have raised my voice especially against the wanton use of the bone plate.

It is truly unfortunate that, in being so far from the great centers of learning of the East and of Europe, almost in fact at the end of the world, we lose the proper perspective of things and acquire instead a distorted view of their proportions, too often accepting any new fad as if it were gospel and overlooking the fact that, in other places, properly applied conservative methods still yield good results in the vast majority of cases. We have been making the same mistake as the man who hearing so much every day of aviation in the present war, believes that modern armies are composed solely of airmen and that aerial combat is the whole thing in modern tactics. But let us remember that not one per cent. of Eastern or European surgeons would indorse the indications that some lax and easy men find for plating each and every fracture they do not know how to reduce otherwise. The gullibility of the many for anything that is well advertised, combined with a craze for novelty and a desire for publicity, seems to be the chief factor responsible for this vogue of the harmful bone plate.

The matter has now reached a point where we can rightfully demand an answer to the question: Have not many of these operations, purporting to remedy the bad results of the old conservative methods, been unnecessary, and done, on the contrary much more harm than good? No doubt surgeons of the conservative school are to blame for many crooked and shortened limbs; but on the other hand the advocates of operation at all cost are themselves responsible for a good many infections, amputations, and deaths, caused directly by the use of metal plates; such unfortunate results more than outweigh the short-comings of older procedures.

The bone plate has been thoroughly advertised by cleverly written books and imposing articles supplemented by beautiful radiographs that catch the eye of every reader and spur the young and ambitious surgeon to emulate the great deeds of Mr. A. Lane. But to those inclined to criticism it seems that a man of half-truths and unproven facts like Mr. Lane is not a safe guide to be implicitly followed in such things; for an operator who recommends the use of a heavy plate to unite a slender bone, or a man who advocates total colectomy to cure arthritis and tuberculosis of the joints, thus causing a patient to undergo a most serious operation which is based on a very weak and doubtful hypothesis,—such a man, I say, cannot be accepted as a reliable guide. He lacks a sense of proportion; as the French would say, "He uses a siege gun to shoot at sparrows."